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S E C R E T AMMAN 003904

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IRAQI MFA INSPECTION TEAM TO RECOMMEND REOPENING
IRAQI EMBASSY IN AMMAN FOR CONSULAR SERVICES

REF: STATE 156956

Classified By: PolCouns Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

1. (S) PolCouns met June 26 with the members of the Iraqi MFA's inspection team, Amb. Zaid Noori and Abdul Baqi Ismail Ali (ref). Noori said that they had no trouble getting into the Iraqi Embassy in Amman on June 25 and had found the morale of the Iraqi staff quite high, "since all the intelligence people have left and only real MFA people remain." Ali, who Noori described as "the most senior financial inspector in the MFA," had just begun his examination of the accounts of the Iraqi Embassy and could not yet draw any conclusions. Ali said that, from records in Baghdad, there was a real possibility that the Iraqi embassies in Beirut and Damascus had been used to collect and funnel to Baghdad kickbacks from illegally smuggled oil. Noori and Ali hoped to travel to Beirut on June 28, then on to Damascus June 30 or July 1 to conduct preliminary embassy inspections there.

2. (S) Noori related that they had discovered a quantity of handguns, AK-47's, and ammunition "inappropriate for a diplomatic mission" stored at the Iraqi Embassy compound. He said that he would almost certainly ask the Jordanian government to take possession of the weapons for safekeeping until a new Iraqi government could decide on what to do with them. In the meantime, he had recorded all of the serial numbers of the weapons and, on his return to Baghdad, would try to determine their origin within the Iraqi government.

3. (C) Noori said that a second key goal of their mission to Amman was to look at the possibility of reopening consular services for the Iraqi community in Jordan, which he estimated at 300,000. He said that many of the Iraqis who had traveled from Jordan to Iraq after the war had done so on expired passports. Since the MFA is not yet issuing new passports, those Iraqis do not have the travel documents needed to gain entry into other countries. Noori said he would recommend to the MFA's Steering Committee in Baghdad that the Iraqi Embassy in Amman reopen for consular services as soon as possible, and that the CPA consider issuing some type of temporary travel documents to permit Iraqis to enter and leave Iraq until formal passports are issued.

GNEHM